

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 11490

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM SALT SOPN UR US
SUBJECT: ARBATOV ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS

REF: MOSCOW 11166

1. AT AN INFORMAL
LUNCH WITH ARBATOV ON AUGUST 8 (ON HIS
INVITATION) I OPENED BY NOTING THAT WHILE THERE WERE NEGATIVE
ELEMENTS IN HIS AUGUST 3 PRAVDA ARTICLE IT ENDED ON POSITIVE
NOTE: THAT DETENTE HAS A FUTURE AND THAT GOOD RELATIONS "DEMAND
THE WILL AND REAL EFFORTS OF BOTH SIDES" (REFTEL). I SAID
THIS WAS REFRESHINGLY OBJECTIVE STATEMENT AGAINST BACKGROUND
OF DRUM BEAT INSISTENCE BY SOVIET OFFICIALS AND MEDIA THAT
EVERYTHING WAS UP TO U.S.

2. WHILE AGREEING THAT DETENTE WAS A TWO WAY STREET, ARBATOV
COUNTERED BY CLAIMING THAT NINETY PERCENT OF THE FAULT FOR THE
DOWNTURN LAY WITH THE U.S. THE USSR WAS THE AGGRIEVED PARTY:
NEVER IN HIS MEMORY HAD A PRESIDENT ENJOYED IN USSR SUCH GOOD
WILL AND HIGH HOPES ON HIS INAUGURATION AS HAD PRESIDENT
CARTER. THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE FOLLOWED BY THE "SURPRISE"
VANCE ARMS CONTROL PACKAGE IN MARCH HAD, THEREFORE, AN
EVEN GREATER PSYCHOLOGICAL EMOTIONAL IMPACT THAN MIGHT
HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE REGISTERED. THERE WERE THOSE IN THE
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USSR, FOR INSTANCE, WHO SUSPECTED THAT VANCE HAD COME
HERE WITH A PACKAGE WHICH HAD BEEN DELIBERATELY PREPARED
SO AS TO BE REJECTED BY SOVIETS IN ORDER THAT U.S. COULD
FEEL FREE TO PROCEED WITH NEW WEAPONS SYSTEMS. HAD THE
MARCH SALT PACKAGE BEEN ACCEPTABLE, DETENTE COULD HAVE
BEEN "PUT BACK ON THE RAILS", NOTWITHSTANDING THE EARLIER
HUMAN RIGHTS FLAP. AS IT WAS, THE MARCH FAILURE DEEPENED

SOVIET DOUBTS TO THE POINT THAT SOME WERE FRANKLY SKEPTICAL AND SUSPICIOUS REGARDING PRESIDENT CARTER'S REAL INTENTIONS ON ARMS CONTROL. IN ANY EVENT, ARGUED ARBATOV, WE SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, FOR IN HIS VIEW THE NEXT -2-3 MONTHS WOULD BE "CRUCIAL" FOR OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. HERE AND AT SEVERAL OTHER PLACES IN THE CONVERSATION HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR A CONTINUING DIALOGUE AND "REAL COMMUNICATION" SO AS TO OVERCOME MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

3. TAKING HIS CUE, I ASKED WHAT CONCRETELY HE COULD RECOMMEND. ARBATOV REPLIED THAT THE CENTRAL ISSUE REMAINED SALT AND PARTICULARLY CRUISE MISSILES. NOTING OUR DEEP CONCERN RE RECENT IMPROVED HEAVY SOVIET ICBM'S AND OF VASTLY IMPROVED AIR DEFENSE CAPABILITIES, I SAID MANY IN WASHINGTON WERE GENUINELY WORRIED ABOUT SOVIET INTENTIONS AND THAT IN MUX PERSONAL VIEW THE U.S. CRUISE MISSILE AS AN EFFECTIVE PENETRATION WEAPON WAS HERE TO STAY. WHAT, I ASKED, ARE THE SOVIETS PREPARED TO OFFER AS A QUID PRO QUO IN CRUISE LIMITATIONS? CLAIMING THAT SOVIET ICBM'S WERE NOT CONCEIVED AS A COUNTERFORCE WEAPON (ALTHOUGH HE COULD NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME DAY THEY MIGHT BECOME SO), ARBATOV SAID HE HOPED THAT AT VIENNA WE COULD COME TO A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT LIMITING THE "RANGE AND APPLICATION" OF CRUISE MISSILES. OTHERWISE, HE

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SAID, SOVS WOULD BE OBLIGED INCREASE THEIR OWN CRUISE MISSILE DEVELOPMENT AND DEPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND AS THIRD COUNTRIES DISCOVERED "THIS CHEAP AND EFFECTIVE" DELIVERY TECHNIQUE, NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION PROBLEM WOULD BE MAGNIFIED, AND BOTH U.S. AND USSR WOULD SUFFER (N.B. THIS IS AN OLD BUT EFFECTIVE DEBATING POINT OF ARBATOV'S.). AS FOR SPECIFIC QUID PRO QUO, HE NEVER REALLY ANSWERED MY QUESTIONS BEYOND THE GENERAL ASSURANCE THAT A BREAKTHROUGH IN SALT TOGETHER WITH PROGRESS ON PERIPHERAL ARMS CONTROL ISSUES (E.G. CTB AND INDIAN OCEAN), PLUS A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF BELGRADE II COULD REJUVENATE DETENTE.

4. RE BELGRADE II, I STRESSED THAT WE DO NOT INTEND TO PRODUCE A CONFRONTATION THERE BUT THAT MUCH DEPENDS ON WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN NOW AND THEN. FOR INSTANCE, SHOULD MOSCOW LAUNCH A SHOW TRIAL OF SHCHARANSKIY, THE RESULTANT PRESSURES WITHIN THE U.S. WOULD BE ENORMOUS. ARBATOV'S RESPONSE WAS SERIOUS AND MEASURED: THE SOVIET LEGAL SYSTEM, HE CLAIMED, NOW PREOVIDED EVEN STRICTER PROTECTION OF A DEFENDENT'S RIGHTS WHILE UNDER INVESTIGATION AND DETENTION THAN BEFORE. FRANKLY THERE WAS A "GOOD

CASE" AGAINST SHCHARANSKIY AND SURELY THE U.S. COULD NOT ARGUE THAT HE SHOULD NOT BE DEALT WITH ACCORDING TO SOVIET LAW.

5. ON MEDIA TREATMENT ARBATOV CLAIMED THAT THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BROADCASTS OF VOA, DEUTSCHE WELLE "AND OTHER RADISS" (CLEARLY IMPLYING RL AND RFE), ON HUMAN RIGHTS HAD INCENSED THE OVERWHELMING PROPORTION OF SOVIET LISTENERS, ALTHOUGH HE CONCEDED THAT RECENTLY THE VOA HAD BEEN "SOMEWHAT BETTER". WHEN I NOTED THAT SOVIET DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL MEDIA TREATMENT OF THE U.S. WAS UNBALANCED AND EVEN WORSE, ARBATOV SMILED AND SAID THAT AFTER ALL, ONLY THE STATE DEPARTMENT, CIA AND SPECIAL U.S. MONITORING SERVICES LISTENED TO SOVIET RADIO BROADCASTS BEAMED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THE U.S. HE SAID THAT THESE BROADCASTS WERE WRITTEN BY AN INSIGNIFICANT GROUP OF "UNKNOWN SOLDIERS", THE IMPLICATION BEING THAT THEY HAD LITTLE CENTRAL GUIDANCE. INEVITABLY THE TALK DRIFTED TO MY JULY 5 TV NON-APPEARANS. WHEN I DISABUSED ARBATOV OF THE NOTION THAT MY DRAFT REMARKS HAD BEEN PREPARED BY WASHINGTON HE SAID THAT IN FAIRNESS BOTH SIDES WERE WRONG. ON THE ONE HAND, KNOWING HOW DEEP THE SOVIET IRRITATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS I SHOULD HAVE AVOIDED THE SUBJECT, JUST AS HE HAD RESISTED THE TEMPTATION TO DISCUSS WATERGATE IN HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES SHOULD HAVE LET ME SPEAK. I SAID I COULD AGREE WITH THE LATTER.

6. HARKING BACK TO HIS CALL FOR GREATER DIALOGUE AND REAL COMMUNICATION, I ASKED HOW HE NOW FELT ABOUT A CARTER-BREZHNEV MEETING. CHOOSING HIS WORDS CAREFULLY, ARBATOV SAID THAT ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT NOT BE NECESSARY TO HAVE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO SIGN, A MEETING WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY PREPARED WITH CLEAR ATTENDANT UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT THAT SOMETHING POSITIVE WOULD EMERGE AND THAT MEETING WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED RELATIONS. PAST SOVIET EXPERIENCE, HE SAID, (OBVIOUSLY ALLUDING TO THE KENNEDY-KHRUSHCHEV CONFRONTATION) HAD SHOWN THAT FAILURE TO PRODUCE SUCCESS COULD OF ITSELF HAVE A COUNTERPRODUCTIVE EFFECT.

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7. COMMENT: ARBATOR SEEMS TO HAVE RECOVERED FROM THAT DEPRESSION WHICH OBSERVERS HAD NOTED -- ALONG WITH HEAVY DRINKING - OVER THE PAST MONTH AND WHICH SOME HAD ATTRIBUTED TO HIS CHAGRIN AND INSECURITY AT HAVING MISCALLED SO MANY SHOTS AS A KEY US-WATCHER.

8. HE MADE NO MENTION OF HAVING SEEN BREZHNEV RECENTLY ALTHOUGH HE HINTED THAT HE HAD READ BREZHNEV'S LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT WHICH BREZHNEV HANDED TO ME ON JULY 5. HE SAID LITTLE ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST, THE HORN, AFRICA OR CHINA (EXCEPT TO STRESS THAT CHINA WAS A FACTOR ALONG WITH FBS IN SOVIET SALT CALCULATIONS) OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, AND TOUCHED ONLY LIGHTLY ON OTHER US-SOVIET BILATERAL ISSUES SUCH AS TRADE. THE ONLY MENTION HE MADE OF SENATOR JACKSON WAS WHEN HE ARGUED THAT PRESIDENT CARTER COULD NOT HAVE IT BOTH WAYS; HE COULD NOT "APPEASE" JACKSON AND SEEK DETENTE SIMULTANEOUSLY. THE NEUTRON BOMB ISSUE CAME UP WHEN I NOTED MY CONCERN AT THE SOVIETS HEAVY HANDED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN NOW UNDERWAY IN ALL MEDIA; THIS COULD ONLY WORSEN THE CLIMATE. ARBATOV SEEMED NOT TO APPROVE BUT POINTED OUT THAT IN RESPONSIBLE SOVIET QUARTERS THERE WAS SINCERE CONCERN THAT THE NEUTRON BOMB COULD LOWER THE THRESHOLD IN EUROPE. AS A FOOTNOTE I WOULD ADD THAT IN HIS AUGUST 3 CONVERSATION WITH THE FRG AMBASSADOR ARBATOV WAS REPORTEDLY MORE SANGUINE ON MBFR THAN ON SALT, SEEMED TO BE EXPECTING

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SOMETHING ON MBFR FROM BONN, AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE FRG AND FRENCH COULD SERVE AS "MODERATORS" IN US-SOVIET RELATIONS. END COMMENT.
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